



Canada is increasingly becoming home to more newcomer families each year. For newcomer youth, integrating into a new school system can be challenging and isolating. School counsellors can be a positive support for these students but may experience challenges meeting their complex and diverse needs.

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THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Supporting Newcomer Students at School

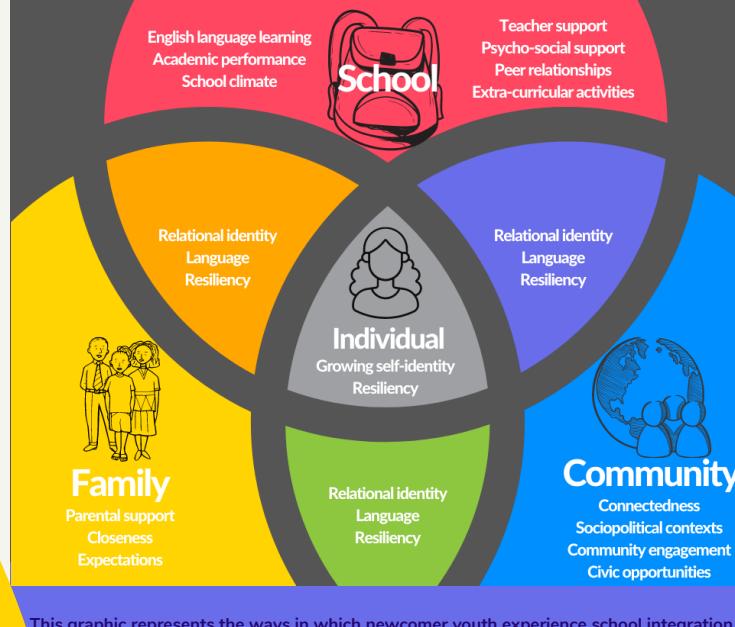
Resources for Counsellors



## Our Research

Newcomer youth are between the ages of 12 to 24, who have immigrated to Canada as first generation immigrants or refugees. We talked to 8 high school newcomer students and 10 university newcomer students over two years about their experiences integrating into the Canadian school system. They shared their stories using cultural probes, such as maps, journals, and photographs, as well as speaking to us in interviews and focus groups. This process is called Arts Based Ethnography. We also used a social justice framework which addressed issues of inequity, power and oppression to challenge the systems that limit newcomers.

Students shared that they were more engaged and connected with their school and community when they received direct support from school staff and this led to increased academic success and social-emotional well-being. We've taken the experiences they shared with us and created this resource to support teachers in their ongoing work with newcomer students.



This graphic represents the ways in which newcomer youth experience school integration.

## Creating Supportive Counselling Relationships

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Newcomer students told us that building strong relationships with trusted counsellors early in the process of school integration provided important support, academically and socially. They found that counsellors who had empathy for their situation allowed them to feel comfortable reaching out for assistance.

### NAVIGATING PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

Bridging the gap between school culture and parental expectations is a challenge faced by newcomer students. Counsellors who are empathetic to the values held by newcomer parents can build connections between home and school. These relationships support newcomer youth in navigating the process of school integration.

## Supporting Newcomer Students

### PRACTISING MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING

Multicultural counselling and cultural competency are counselling practises that can be implemented to benefit newcomer students. Training for counsellors can provide knowledge, skills and attitudes for working with students from diverse backgrounds with specific needs. There is an increasing need for newcomer students to receive culturally responsive services that directly address their specific needs.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Newcomer students view education in Canada as a pathway to increased opportunity. Career planning strategies and programs that provide information about continued education specifically designed for newcomer students are beneficial in supporting their plans and reducing the academic gap.

### ENCOURAGING SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Supporting newcomer students in building multicultural, diverse peer groups helps to "bridge the gap". Helping these students get involved in school activities that are aligned with cultural values supports them in developing peer groups and fosters a sense of acceptance.

**"Educational systems have a cultural and social responsibility to create welcoming and engaging spaces for newcomer youth in order to maximize their academic success and civic potential."**

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